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ABSTRACT

The National Level Internship Program (NLIP) is a full-time field experience of one calendar year for eight selected doctoral candidates in special and general education administration. This article describes the NLIP experience from two perspectives. First, general education administration students describe their experiences working within the special education context and the special education interns describe their experiences within general education associations. Second, similarities and differences in university preparation program orientations are highlighted as the interns describe their practicum experience. (Author/IRT)

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Integration through an Internship - Special Education and General Education

The National Level Intership Program (NLIP) is a full-time field experience of one calendar year for eight selected doctoral candidates in special and general education administration. The field-based experience occur within national education of federal and private associations and agencies (e.g., United State Office of Education/Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, American Association of School Administrators, National Association of State Boards of Education, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council for Exceptional Children). The objectives of NLIP are two-fold: first, to provide the student with the opportunity to wed "theory and practice" in a controlled, supervised situation and secondly to facilitate the integration of special and general education administration.

The purpose of this article is to describe the NLIP experience from two perspectives: One, general education administration students describe their experience to date working within the special education context, as well as the special education intern's describing their experiences within general education associations. Second, similarities and differences in university preparation programs orientations are highlighted as the interns describe their practicum experience.

EA 009 628

General Educators in a Special Educational Agencies

Gerald Griffin - *Bureau of Education for the Handicapped*

The concept of interning takes on quite different individual perspectives. For the inexperienced person, perhaps a recent graduate, the internship experiences provide an opportunity to test the meshing of textbook theories and work-a-day practices. The experienced practitioner who enters an internship places more emphasis on the broadening potential of the experience, that is, exposure to a broader professional perspective.

The UCEA Internship includes both of these two perspectives, and during the year of internship both novice interns undergo a metamorphosis. Three dimensions interact to assist in the resulting changes: the experience - inexperience dimension, the private - federal agency dimension, and the intern activities dimension.

In the first case, each individual comes from either a special education or general administrative background, whether developed in an academic or work setting. Through agency placements and intern interaction, both groups develop an understanding of the other. Initially, these attempts are halting efforts at best and usually involve clarification of concepts or procedures which previously were assumed to be professional givens. In time, each develops a "conceptual" appreciation of the other's background. Discussions tend to be conceptual as well as analyses of processes.

Placement in a number of private and public agencies also contributes to the change of perceptions of interns. Each placement is different, and as interns attempt to develop a role consistent with their perspectives, attitudes often change from confusion and frustration, to amazement and comfort. As interns share information about their various agencies, they frequently discover threads of commonality and develop agency role clarity.

The intern activities develop mainly as the result of negotiations occurring among the interns during their orientation and subsequent meetings. Frequently individual professional interests dictate the associations that develop among interns. Common interest involved with special education advocacy, a major objective of the internship, has been facilitated by presentations at conventions, conferences, and activities within the respective agencies.

These four dimensions have outlined internship role perspectives and the process of intern socialization. As the internship continues, monitoring of these two dimensions may provide a useful frame of reference for analyzing the quality nature of the internship.

David Rostetter - *(Bureau of Education for the Handicapped)*

One of the major goals of the UCEA/NLIP is cross-fertilization between the fields of general and special education administration. The basic component of this process is the establishment of credibility between the intern and the individuals with whom the intern interacts. If the intern fails to establish credibility, or if the agency is not responsive to the intern's attempts to become involved, the prospect of any significant "cross-fertilization's" occuring is decreased considerably. Therefore, the issue of intern credibility is a critical one.

The most frequent stumbling block in the establishment of "intern credibility" is the issue of generalized or specialized expertise. When a general administration intern enters a special education agency, the personnel can view the new arrival as generally prepared but specifically unskilled. When this occurs the intern faces a struggle to prove his/her capability to perform.

This struggle involves two tasks which must be undertaken to establish credibility. They are: 1) displaying and utilizing areas of expertise which are of benefit to the organization, and 2) presenting an image of openness which conveys the ability and willingness to learn.

The accomplishment of these two tasks involves a healthy mixture of confidence, strength, humility, modesty, and adventurousness. In other words, to overcome the generalist-specialist dilemma, the intern ought to be an ideal individual. All interns are somewhat lacking in one or more of these characteristics (usually humility and modesty). So the "ideal" individual is rather difficult, if not impossible, to find. However, the intern must grapple with, the problem and his/her impact on the organization and the organizations impact on the intern depend largely upon how successful or unsuccessful the intern is at resolving the generalist-specialist dilemna.

Jeffrey J. Zettel - *(Council for Exceptional Children)*

The thought of participating in a national level internship program, the purpose of which is to mesh the fields of general and special education, can be intriguing and problematic to a general educator. Having the opportunity to come to Washington to witness the creation and dissemination of national educational policy is intriguing and at the same time concern can develop over having to participate in this process through an agency with a philosophy and goals different from one's own.

Having been trained and experienced in the field of general educational administration, I shared these feelings when I became a UCEA Intern. Although I was most excited over the prospect of coming to Washington, I also realized that I had a limited background in special education and questioned whether I had the expertise to work within a nationally-organized special educational agency. Moreover, upon accepting this position, my initial concern was quickly reinforced as I found myself emeshed in a new world of terminology and rhetoric. Terms such as CEC, BEH, least restrictive alternative, due process, and LD had to be quickly learned and assimilated. At times I felt as if I was entering into a new doctoral program instead of just completing one.

My initial concern was quickly transformed to almost awe, however, as I began to meet the people with whom I would be associated with. As I met each staff member, I recall being impressed by their youth, their apparent knowledge base, their seemingly endless energy, and their dedication to the concept of special education. I couldn't help but marvel how all of these people could appear to know what was being said in a court case in Mississippi, what a particular Senator was quoted as saying in the previous day's Congressional Record, what specific delivery system would best benefit a particular elementary school, and yet, at the same time, be able to demonstrate how each of these related to an individual handicapped child.

Although I am not sure of the impact I might be having upon my particular agency, I'm sure of the impact it's had upon me. The people I have met this year, the places I have seen and the experiences I have felt, will not be quickly forgotten. As a general educator who has had the opportunity to participate as a national level intern within a special educational agency, I can truly say that it has been a most rewarding experience. Furthermore, I can only hope that others have this same experience and exposure which UCEA has afforded me.

Summary

At first it appears that each of general educational administrators who are serving as UCEA National Level Policy Interns within special educational agencies have described their experiences from very different perspectives, but there is a distinct commonality across all three. Each author has expressed his personal experiences in terms of their relationship to the organization to which he has been assigned. In other words, the three scenarios are tied together and related through the theme of organizational theory.

Zettel's description dealt with the problem of entry into a national organization. Entrance into any organization can lead to anxiety, but when the new agency is outside the realm of one's expertise and when it is involved in the production of national educational policy, the intensity of one's initial anxiety naturally increases. Once the intern gets over the initial barriers of new organizational terminology and rhetoric and discovers and adjusts to the informal and formal organizational structures of the agency, s/he begins to establish his professional and personal credibility.

Rostetter's remarks described the concept of credibility in light of its importance to both the intern and his/her agency. If the "cross fertilization" between special and general education is to take place, the intern needs to be aware of the formable tasks which face him/her. Not only does the intern need to bring competences and expertise which will benefit the agency, but also s/he needs to display openness and receptiveness to new ideas from members of his agency.

At the same time, it is important for an intern's agency to portray the same feelings of expertise and openness. With the establishment of intern and agency credibility, both can share in a more productive atmosphere.

Finally, Griffin addressed the multi-dimensional aspects which can affect the productivity of a national level internship. According to him, the impact of an intern's experience

in Washington can depend largely upon four ingredients: 1) the educational and personal background which s/he brings with him/her; 2) the type of agency (i.e. public or private) in which the internship assignment is housed; 3) the negotiations with the agency over responsibilities, duties, and job description; and 4) the interaction and the sharing of experiences between the general and special educational interns.

The commonality which appears within these three is a concern for the relationship of the individual to the organization. Each has attempted to demonstrate the importance of realizing one's initial anxiety of entering into an organization, of establishing credibility, role negotiation, and personal and group interaction. Moreover, in order for a successful internship experience to take place--be it from the perspective of a local administrator coming to a national agency or a general administrator coming to a special educational agency--each of these authors has shown the need for realizing one's personal goals, needs, and aspirations, as well as recognizing those of the organization or agency.

Special Educators in General Educational Agencies

Constance Halter - *(Council of Chief State School Officers)*

A new employee has a lot to learn about the organization and the same is true of an intern. In the educational association arena, it is my perception that the more influential an association is in shaping educational policy at the national level, the more varied are its interests and concerns.

As an intern with a special educational background, I find this to be true in my organization: Its policy concerns are broad; and special education is only one of many areas of interest.

Have I had an impact upon the organization by sensitizing it to special education needs and issues? In a subtle sense, the answer is "Yes." This has occurred in two ways. First, I have attempted to convey to the central office staff my personal feelings about the place special education should assume in the educational enterprise. This includes both an awareness of management problems associated with providing special education services to all children, and the legal and moral obligation to provide those services. Second, in interaction with both staff and members, I have attempted to point out important provisions of current special educational legislation and the spirit behind those provisions, when appropriate.

Many of the people I've talked with now possess a greater understanding of the issues, and, I believe, are pleased to discover that I have some understanding and sympathy for their concerns about special education in the general education context.

Has the organization influenced me? The answer is a resounding "Yes." It has helped me gain a better sense of special education's present and future importance. I have been enlightened concerning my organization's policy position on special education as well. I do not agree with this position unequivocally, but now, at least, I understand it and can work to modify it both throughout the internship year and in the future.

Bill Brown - *(National Association of State Boards of Education)*

Several recent developments have greatly enhanced the possibility for interchange between special and general education. Court decisions have demonstrated that handicapped individuals possess: a) the right to obtain an education, b) the right to adequate treatment, and c) the right to proper placement. The federal government's commitment to the education of handicapped children was shown by the passing of Public Law 93-380 and Public Law 94-142. There now exists the need for the knowledge of the special educator to be included in plans being developed to provide services to all school children. General educators recognize that special education must be included and can no longer be ignored.

The UCEA sponsored internship's association with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), located in Washington, D.C., provides interesting and unique opportunities for an intern's application of special education skills and knowledge to the field of general education. The individual state boards of education maintain either statutory or constitutional policy authority over local school districts in forty-nine out of the fifty states. The development of relevant policies concerning the handicapped by these state boards is a necessity if each state is to adopt and implement special education programming which will adequately serve the needs of the handicapped. The recent federal mandate has placed state board members in a position where they need information to enable them to assess the needs of the handicapped. Several of NASBE's projects provide an intern with the opportunity to apply this knowledge base of special education to disseminate information to state boards.

NASBE's emphasis on special education also permits an intern with special education background, many opportunities to work with education subcommittees of Congress and the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH). There exists the chance to participate in the process of legislation development or regulation formulation on a first-hand basis. Representing an agency such as NASBE allows the intern to apply skills towards a particular organization, while having the benefit of the influence of that organization.

Don R. Barbacovi - *(American Association of School Administrators)*

It would appear that with the enactment of P.L. 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the time has come when general and special education may be forced to "live together" under the same roof--that roof being the local public school. If this

premise is accurate, then the American Association of School Administrators can, and will, play a vital role as a facilitator in this movement toward cooperative development of free, appropriate public school programs for the handicapped.

As a UCEA intern, I can and do serve as a catalyst in providing some initial direction to AASA's activities on behalf of handicapped children. In addition to generally increasing the organization's consciousness level concerning handicapped children in the public schools, I have also been involved in a number of activities designed to increase the awareness of the school administrator. Four of these activities are listed below.

(1) This year, for the first time, a proposed resolution concerning the education of the handicapped will be included as a part of the resolution package to be acted upon by the Delegate Assembly during AASA's annual convention.

(2) The re-establishing of an AASA *ad hoc* committee for the purpose of studying the handicapped and school administration.

(3) The awarding of an USOE grant for the purpose of conducting regional meetings to "air problems, share successes and exchange information on programming for the handicapped."

(4) In conjunction with the grant, AASA will produce an executive handbook that will focus on the implications of P.L. 94-142 for local administrators.

With this effort augmented by other UCEA interns, the union between special and regular education can be realized.

Summary

As in the case of the "general education" interns the special education interns take varying positions regarding their roles and responsibilities in general education agencies. As would be anticipated, different individuals have unique perceptions of their agencies and the roles they will play. However, there is a commonality in the statements of this group, a commonality which stems from a mutual concern for "enlightening" and helping the agency provide improved services to handicapped children.

Ms. Halter's statements relate to her impact on the agency as well as the agency's impact on her. Through her relationships with staff members, she has sought to create a greater understanding of special education issues to her agency. She has, on the other hand, gained a broader understanding of the general educator's perspective in providing services to handicapped children.

The other two interns, Don Barbacovi and Bill Brown, bring the same committment to special education as Connie Halter. They are greatly concerned with their impact on the organization and the role they can play in implementing more effective services to handicapped children. Their skills and knowledge of special education problems and issues place them in a unique position in their agencies. They are new "experts" on the staff which enables them to act as resources for their agencies.

In summary, the special education interns in general education agencies assume the posture of "advocates." Their specific skills and knowledge permit them to play a productive role in effecting change in attitudes and policy within their agencies.